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## Celebratory notes



The Hindu

Lesle Lewis with the choir at the Magic of Music 3 concert Photo: R. Ravindran

### **‘Magic of Music 3’ featuring the Mellow Circle Choir and Lesle Lewis bridged musical eras and genres**

A concert for a cause. A compere with zest. A choir with spirit. A conductor of eminence. A composer with charm. And a band that gave it their all. Together at Sir Mutha Venkatasubbarao Concert Hall they made ‘Magic of Music 3’ an occasion for hope and happiness.

A fundraiser for Prathyasha, Mellow Circle’s home for children with HIV, the concert featured a 60-strong choir conducted by Augustine Paul, a children’s choir led by Shireen Lazarus with incredible instrumental support by the band Blue Note comprising Shyam Benjamin (keyboard), Donan Murray (guitar), Naveen Kumar (bass) and Jeoraj George (drums) and a fitting finale with Lesle Lewis of Colonial Cousins seamlessly blending the sounds of East and West.

Even in a programme that featured songs from musicals and movies, it was rock that metamorphosed from novelty to mainstay. And so the concert that began with Michael Jackson’s ‘Earth Song’, a ballad that incorporates elements of blues, gospel and opera with powerful solos by Ratnakumar and Megha, was later driven by electric guitars. From the jewel box of pop, disco and rock anthems, the choir picked some gems from the Bee Gees (‘Saturday Night Fever’ with images of John Travolta strutting on the dance floor panned on a screen, ‘Hold On’, ‘Words’, ‘Stayin Alive’ and ‘How Deep Is Your Love’) effortlessly slipping from one song to another.

This was followed by the children’s choir belting out *The Sound of Music* standards, ‘Do-Re-Mi’, ‘My Favourite Things’ and ‘Edelweiss’, ‘The Wonderful Thing About Tiggers’ and the theme song of the Seoul Olympics ‘Hand in Hand’ in endearing voices with actions.

It takes an act of will and voice to perform Adele's 'Rolling In The Deep' but Sharanya Gopinath and Valentina Gaspar sang this foot-tapping pop anthem with ease.

Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' came next followed by a Bon Jovi medley. Skillful voice modulation, strobe lights and fast-paced dance moves for 'Living On A Prayer', 'You Give Love A Bad Name', 'Lay Your Hands On Me' and the inspirational 'It's My Life' rang out the message that rock means liberation.

A very different magic show by Gopal followed. The expert conjuror more than just pulled out birds from his hat...he unveiled portraits of Lady Diana to the strains of 'Candle In The Wind' and from nowhere showered the stage with currency notes to the tune of 'Money Money Money'.

Preethy and Prince Andrew rendered Paul Simon's 'She Loves Me Like A Rock' followed by a medley of songs from *Grease* — 'We Go Together' with a beautiful solo by Prashanth Gasper.

Maestro Ilaiyaraaja's indelible hit from *Panneer Pushpangal* 'Kodai Kaala Kaatre' with vocal effects was a refreshing poetic presentation. It held the audience spellbound once the male voices fell in line.

And at long last it was time for Lesle Lewis who with Hariharan has taken soft rock into a realm of spiritual calm. With the intimacy of a private concert, Lesle engaged the audience first with 'Krishna Nee Begane Baaro'. He followed it up with that paean to friendship 'Yaaron' from *Rockford* with the happy flavour of a singalong. A couple of songs from his new album *Saawariya Calling* with excellent drumming by Jeoraj led to Stevie Wonder's raucous rock ballad, 'Superstition' with Donan giving it his all on the guitar and Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Cotton Fields'. And finally Lesle's rich baritone pinned the star with 'Something About The Way You Smile' before ending it all with where they began — 'Earth Song' on a note of hope.